

**Testimony of Verta Stevenson, Parent, New Haven Public Schools  
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations Committee  
February 16, 2016**

Good evening respected members of the General Assembly Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak about Governor Malloy's proposed budget and how it impacts me and my son.

My son Lateef has attended a few different public schools in his young life. He is a special education student. I struggled to find a school that could meet his needs. In middle school alone, he has attended three schools: the Truman School in the sixth and seventh grade. The Truman Street School was wonderful, they did everything they could to help my son learn. But it was not the right environment for him. He transferred to Lincoln Bassett and a year later is now a student at Waterford Country School.

At Waterford Country School, Lateef has access to the specialized programs, resources and community services he needs to do well.

I am here today because it is my belief that our public school system should have access to the resources it needs to take care of all children, no matter their learning needs. I send my son to a private school because I could not find him a seat in a high quality public school in my city.

I am here today to ask you, our state leader, to expand access to great schools, like high-quality public charter schools for children like Lateef. As a parent of a special-education student, I was able to seek private schooling at no extra cost when my son's public schools failed to meet his needs. I am grateful for this opportunity but also aware that money that is diverted out of the public school system for Lateef.

If we funded all schools fairly then perhaps Lateef would be able to attend a great public school that could help him learn. We need to do more to encourage good public charter schools to educate Connecticut children. Unfortunately, due to an unfair funding system that gives public charters \$4,000 less per student per year, it's hard for public charter schools to serve students. That's unfair to parents, it's unfair to students, and it has to change.

Education is an important priority for me, you need a good education to make something of your life. I worry everyday that I don't have enough to help my kids make it in this world. As parents, we are looking to you for help in providing our children access to high quality schools.

Thank you.